

Rural Gallatin Gateway

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Rural Gallatin Gateway provides many of the amenities that make the area a desirable place to live. Agricultural landscapes, natural amenities such as wildlife habitat, the Gallatin River and other watercourses, wetlands, rural lifestyle, and the night sky all provide the context for rural Gallatin Gateway. Additionally, uses such as home-based businesses and gravel pits are a rural reality in the area and will continue in a way that is compatible with surrounding land uses. The following policies will ensure that, as rural Gateway grows, these amenities and rural realities are protected:

4.1 Land Use Map

4.2 Natural Assets

4.3 Land Use Compatibility

4.4 Existing Agricultural Operations and the Rural Character of the Area

Policy 4.1. Land Use Map

Adopt a land use map designating three land use classifications in rural Gallatin Gateway. Generally, Rural Gallatin Gateway is defined as land outside of the Downtown Core and the Highway 191 classifications.

Rural Gallatin Gateway has seen varied development over the past 100 years resulting in several different neighborhoods. Each neighborhood has different characteristics and needs. The land use and zoning map adopted to implement this plan will recognize those different needs.

Existing subdivision and COS development. Parts of Rural Gallatin Gateway were subdivided and developed years ago, including the Little Bear and Bear Creek Properties developments in the southern portion of the district, the extensive Certificate of Survey (COS) development in the northeast portion of the district, and COS and minor subdivision development west of the river. All of this development is large lot, using well and septic systems. This land use classification and zoning district will provide protection of the character of these existing residential neighborhoods by allowing continued residential uses while limiting commercial uses to home occupations and home-based businesses. In areas with appropriate access, lot splits and other minor subdivisions will be allowed.

Rural West. This classification consists primarily of the undeveloped parcels west of the river. Many of these parcels continue to be part of working farms and are somewhat constrained by the Gallatin River floodplain. Given the riparian nature of all land adjacent to the river, these parcels contain significant riparian

habitat that should be considered with all new development proposals. New subdivision in this area should be low density, with the opportunity for increased density if an open space development pattern is used.

Rural East. This classification consists of the undeveloped parcels along the eastern border of the planning jurisdiction. Most of these parcels continue to be part of working farms and many have significant constraints regarding access. The southern portion of this area has been identified by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks as having significant value to wildlife, and as a wildlife corridor for elk and deer winter range. Given the agricultural nature of the area, the constraints on access (and, consequently, to emergency service vehicles), and the high wildlife value, future development should be restricted to low density. Higher-density development could be allowed if an open space development pattern (clustering) is used.

Rural South. This classification includes parcels in the southeast area of the planning jurisdiction. As with the Rural East classification, new development should consider the significant wildlife habitat in the area, and density and design requirements should be similar in both districts.

Policy 4.2. Natural Assets

Adopt standards protecting natural assets in the area. The natural environment is one of the primary values of residents of the Gallatin Gateway area. It shall be the policy of rural Gallatin Gateway to protect and maintain the natural assets of the area, such as wetlands, groundwater, the Gallatin River, and wildlife habitat. This policy will be pursued using the following strategies:

- 4.2.1 **Adopt standards requiring minimum setbacks to watercourses and wetlands, including the Gallatin River.** The Gallatin County Subdivision Regulations currently require setbacks of 300 feet to the Gallatin River and 150 feet to all other watercourses as a condition of subdivision approval. Adopting zoning standards would extend these setbacks to all existing lots in rural Gallatin Gateway and would provide significant protection to riparian and wildlife resources, as well as avoid potential floodplain issues.
- 4.2.2 **Protect rural character, open space resources, and wildlife habitat by requiring open space development patterns.** Preserving the rural landscape that occupies approximately 75% of the planning area is an important goal of this plan. As countywide zoning standards are established for development outside of the planning jurisdiction, large landowners within the planning area shall be afforded greater development potential. As a group participating in the planning process, large landowners have agreed that an average future density of one lot per 10 acres (average density, rather than minimum lot size) for new residential development is acceptable, with development clustered and sixty-five percent (65%) of the site preserved in open space. Development shall be designed on-site to protect existing agricultural operations, wildlife habitat, and natural assets such as watercourses and

wetlands. Approval of development remains the authority of the Gallatin County Commission, and each development plan will be considered individually and with respect to the overall guidance of the Gallatin Gateway Community Plan and the Gallatin County Growth Policy.

- 4.2.3 **Require wildfire mitigation plans for new development.** The entire Gallatin Gateway Planning Jurisdiction has been classified by the Department of Natural Resources Management (DNRC) as being within the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and at increased risk to wildfire. New development in rural Gallatin Gateway should work closely with the Gateway Rural Fire Department, the DNRC and the United States Forest Service to mitigate risks of wildfire.

Policy 4.3 Land Use Compatibility

Rural Gallatin Gateway is currently a mix of agricultural operations, residential development, light commercial and manufacturing, and a few gravel pits. As the area grows, it shall be the policy of rural Gallatin Gateway to ensure that new development is compatible with existing land uses. This policy will be pursued using the following strategies.

- 4.3.1 **Respect rural realities.** Future growth in the rural Gateway area shall respect rural realities. Home-based businesses, gravel pits, and other commercial operations currently exist, and future development should consider this reality. Gallatin County will adopt development standards to ensure compatibility between new industrial, commercial uses, and residential uses in rural Gallatin Gateway.
- 4.3.1.a It is generally understood that the primary use of property in rural Gateway shall be agricultural and/or residential. Secondary uses may be commercial. Commercial operations will be limited to businesses which have a small number of employees on parcels where the primary use is agricultural or residential. This policy is not intended to restrict any home occupations or businesses conducted by agricultural users or other diverse uses compatible with rural property, nor gravel pit operations as described in Policy 4.3.3 below.
- 4.3.1.b Existing commercial uses shall be grandfathered and allowed to continue.
- 4.3.2 **Adopt standards for mitigation of potential nuisances.** Gallatin County will use the development standards to require mitigation of potential nuisances, including noise, glare, and the improper handling of solid waste.
- 4.3.3 **Adopt standards for gravel pits.** Much of the greater Gallatin Gateway area is old floodplain of the Gallatin River. Consequently, gravel

resources in the area are plentiful. As more and more development has taken place in rural Gallatin Gateway, however, conflicts have arisen between residential development and gravel extraction. The development standards adopted to implement this plan will require new and expanded gravel pit operations to obtain a conditional use permit to address off-site mitigation measures. If temporary and appropriately mitigated, gravel pits are expected to continue being a part of rural life in the area.

Policy 4.4 Existing Agricultural Operations And The Rural Character Of The Area

Recognize the importance of existing agricultural operations in the area by requiring protection of agricultural canals and ditches and by directing the majority of growth in the area into the core area identified on the land use map.

The Gallatin Gateway area has over 9,000 acres in existing agricultural production. All of these agricultural lands contribute to the character of the area, and the impact on agriculture has been identified as one of the primary concerns of residents of the Gateway area.

The character of the soils and the climate create large demands for water to support crops. Since the early 1800's, surface water has been diverted from the Gallatin River to meet these demands. Within this area, there are several major canals and numerous smaller ditches. These supply systems are fragile and require continual maintenance to provide this valuable resource for agriculture. State statutes provide for access and easements for the owners of these ditches and canals and are in place to provide for access and easement for the owners of these ditches and canals. The water systems can be as large as 18 feet in width for a canal, to 18 inches in width for a small ditch. The equipment used to maintain these structures can vary from a large excavator to a small tractor. Maintenance often includes cleaning the grass and trash, as well as occasional removal of trees and other vegetation which remove water and impede water flow.

Within the Gallatin Gateway Planning Jurisdiction, there are five major and several smaller irrigation ditches carrying large amounts of water. The larger ditches are the West Gallatin Canal, High Line Ditch, Noble Ditch, Farmer's Canal, and the Allison-Lewis Ditch. Other identified ditches are the Gilmore-Todd, Bush-Etherington, Cockrell, and Shadoan. The large ditch companies have water flowing from April through October of each year with volumes which have the potential to produce hazards near these systems. The large canals depend on natural water ways to release water during time of emergencies. It is essential for development to be educated on these features to avoid placing structures in places which impede operation and maintenance of these water way areas.

Agricultural lands and waterways shall be protected through the following policies:

4.4.1 Adopt development standards requiring new development to mitigate its impact on existing canals and ditches. Generally, these standards will:

- 4.4.1.a Require new development adjacent to a canal or ditch to contact the appropriate canal company prior to approval;
- 4.4.1.b Require acknowledgment by the canal company that contact has been made, along with any comments or conditions they require to mitigate impacts;
- 4.4.1.c Prohibit channeling of stormwater or snowmelt runoff into a canal or ditch without express consent of the company;
- 4.4.1.d Establish a setback from the centerline of any canal or ditch;
- 4.4.1.e Require agreement by canal company prior to alteration of a canal or ditch;
- 4.4.1.f Require new subdivision to locate canals or ditches in parkland or open space.

4.4.2 Exempt agricultural practices and structures from future zoning regulations.

4.4.3 Exempt family transfer exemptions from any future zoning regulations.

4.4.5 Recognize the right to farm and ranch in the Gallatin Gateway area.

Agricultural operations are abundant throughout rural Gallatin Gateway. This policy states that non-agricultural landowners accept and are aware that standard agricultural and farming practices can result in smoke, dust, animal odors, flies and machinery noise, and that standard agricultural practices feature the use of heavy equipment, burning, chemical sprays and the use of machinery sometimes 24 hours a day.